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Billy Carter's Ties to Libya Carried Risks

A complex federal investigation of two ex-CIA agents who supplied arms to Libya has focused on a famous target: Billy Carter.

As I have noted in the past, a special prosecutor is needed to investigate the tangled dealings of the two ex-spies, Frank Terpil and Edwin Wilson. There are several aspects of their connection to Jimmy Carter's brother that bear looking into:

- Terpil's statements to associates that he was pivotal in behind-the-scenes activity that led Billy Carter to accept a \$220,000 "loan" from the Libyans, presumably in return for any influence he might have had on the then-president.

- Similar statements by Wilson, including one discussion of assassinating Billy for reneging on a deal with the Libyans.

- The indisputable fact that Terpil knew details of Billy's Libyan deals long before they were made public, and even before federal investigators were aware of them.

- The close similarity of an oil-commission deal for Terpil in 1976 to the one offered to Billy Carter in 1979.

Billy Carter first visited Libya with some Georgia cronies in the fall of 1978, ostensibly to promote commercial ties with the Libyans. But intelligence sources said that Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi had Billy targeted as a White House influence-peddler.

Qaddafi apparently believed that brother Billy could persuade the president to release eight C130 transport planes, which had been embargoed because of Libya's support for international terrorists. Carter associates said Billy discussed the plane embargo with Libyan officials. Billy denied this, though he admitted discussing it with American officials after his return.

Federal investigators have pointed out that one of ex-CIA man Terpil's main projects, besides supplying explosives and terrorist training to the Libyans, was to arrange delivery of the embargoed C130s. A former business partner of Terpil and Wilson said Terpil advised Qaddafi that Billy might be the vehicle for getting the transport planes.

This associate said Terpil telephoned Billy and invited him to the 10th-anniversary celebration of Qaddafi's coup, in September, 1979. It was then, apparently, that the deal was struck that would give Billy a commission on additional Libyan crude delivered to the Charter Oil Co.

Terpil had attempted to arrange a

similar oil-commission deal for himself two years earlier. The Terpil associate described the arrangement in handwritten notes, now in my possession. I also have a Terpil telegram in which he confirmed the deal, which apparently fell through.

The Terpil partner told my associate Dale Van Atta that he understood the oil deal "was simply a bribe . . ." Billy asked for a \$500,000 "loan"—actually an advance on his expected commissions. The Libyans gave him \$220,000.

Terpil and Billy were spotted together on two occasions during the 1979 celebration.

On Jan. 16, 1980, Billy told a Justice Department official he had indeed met Terpil on the 1979 trip, and that Terpil later followed up with a telephone call about a proposed "machine-gun deal." Carter recanted this statement two months later, but acknowledged he might have autographed a picture of Terpil and himself "To my friend Frank."

The most bizarre twist in the Billy Carter-Terpil-Wilson connection comes from a knowledgeable source who detailed a meeting between Wilson and a professional assassin. According to this source, Wilson was angry over Billy's failure to perform on some unidentified deal, and suggested blowing Billy away by planting explosives in an oil painting. The painting was to be given to Billy, then detonated by remote control.